

First Day of School by ObeyDontStray

Series: [In Another Life \(AU collection\)](#) [2]

Category: Stranger Things - Fandom

Genre: F/M, First day of kindergarten, First day of kindergarten AU, Hopper stayed in Hawkins, Sarah Lives, Single Parents

Language: English

Characters: Benny Hammond, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Sarah Hopper, Will Byers

Relationships: Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-01-25

Updated: 2017-01-25

Packaged: 2022-04-02 00:22:21

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 912

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Jim Hopper can't figure out where Sarah got her bravery from, or her big heart.

parents meeting when they take their kids to class AU (the Hoppers stayed in Hawkins AU)

First Day of School

Benny smiled at the sunny five year old and reached across the bar to tweak one of her blonde pigtails. "You ready for your first day of kindergarten, sweetheart?" He asked as she stole another piece of bacon from her Daddy's plate. Her Daddy shot her a stern look but she smiled up at him with her missing front tooth. He poked her remaining front tooth with an index finger and she giggled, moving to cover her mouth.

"Answer Uncle Benny's question, sweetie." Jim encouraged.

"Yes!" She said enthusiastically.

"Are you going to make a bunch of new friends?"

"Yes!"

Jim caught sight of his watch and nearly jumped from his stool. "We gotta go sweetheart! Give Uncle Benny a quick hug!" She ran to the end of the counter as Jim grabbed his hat and she hugged the big man tightly around his leg. As she ran to the door to catch up to Jim, Benny called out to her "Have a good day sweetie!"

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Jim, in his work uniform, stood with his hands on Sarah's shoulders as the teacher turned her attention to them. "This is Sarah." He said as she squatted to Sarah's level. "Hello Sarah! I'm Miss Cooper. Nice to meet you, Sarah."

"And I'm Jim Hopper, Chief of Police." He said, offering his hand to her when she stood. "Nice to meet you, Chief Hopper." She smiled. "Ready to go, Sarah?"

Sarah turned to smile up at her Daddy. "Bye Daddy!"

"Not so quick, pumpkin." He lifted her from the floor and settled her on her hip so she could kiss him goodbye. "Have a great day honey."

Across the room a mother squatted to her son's level, eye to eye with him. He sniffled as she brushed his tears away. "Everything's going to be okay, Will. Look at all these kids your age! I bet you'll make so many friends today!" He shuddered, the force of his grief making his little body shake, and he clutched her tightly.

Miss Cooper tried to console him but to no avail. The boy buried his face in his mother's pants leg, tears staining his round face. When Sarah squirmed in his arms Jim pressed a kiss to her temple before setting her back on her feet.

Jim watched as Sarah toddled over to the pair, ready to call her back. The words died on his lips when she tapped Will's shoulder. "Play with me?" She asked, motioning towards the pile of building blocks nearby. His big eyes watched her warily and she held her little hand out to him. He took it and together they walked together before sinking to the floor and grabbing fistfuls of blocks.

The boy's mother lifted an eyebrow as the two parents watched their kids interact. She turned to Hopper and shot him a shy smile before the teacher caught her attention and they walked in the opposite direction to sit at one of the little tables. Jim hovered near the children as they played, watching the two construct a tower. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Will's mother trying to sneak past without alerting her son. He spotted her, and the tears began welling up in his eyes again.

Being closer to the kids, Jim squatted to the little boy's level and lay a hand on the boy's shoulder. "Hey champ, everything's going to be okay. Mommy's going away for a little while so you can play and learn, then she'll be back to get you. And then you can tell Mommy about all the fun you had today." The boy looked up at him sniffing but he nodded. "This is my daughter Sarah, and I think she wants to be friends. My girl will look out for you. Right, pumpkin?"

She nodded, her pigtails dancing around her face. "Friends!"

Jim found himself standing outside the classroom door, peering

through the glass at his little girl's back. The little boy's mother sat on the bench outside the door. "Thank you for that." Her voice was so quiet he almost missed it, but he turned to her with a small smile. "First days are tough. I went through all of that last year when she started pre k. After her Mom died-" his voice faltered "she stuck to me like glue. First day was hell."

The woman looked up at him with big dark eyes. "I'm sorry, about your wife."

He nodded and braced a hand against the doorframe. "Life goes on. Cancer's a bitch. I had to be strong for my girl."

"Will's father left us shortly after his fourth birthday. We're separated but he's been in and out of our lives. Will's hesitant to trust anyone but me and his big brother. What you said to him...was amazing." He shot her a grin, the smile reaching his eyes. "It's nothing. I once clung to my mother too."

When he turned to leave she stopped him, her hand on his wrist. "I'm Joyce Byers, by the way."

"Jim Hopper." He replied and she worried her lip between her teeth. "I know you. I mean, of you. You're the police chief."

He smiled and glanced down at the name badge on his chest. "Yeah, I guess you gathered that. Ever think of a career in law enforcement?" He teased lightly.

She mirrored his smile. "I guess I'll see you at pickup time, Chief." He nodded. "See you, Miss Joyce."